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Hurricane coverage:

1 — A weary Houston likely to endure catastrophic flooding through Wednesday, Houston Chronicle, 8/28/2017

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-weather/hurricaneharvey/article/Houston-hunkers-to-Harvey-braces-for-long-storm-12003388.php>

After three days of heavy rains, a few showers don't seem like catastrophe. The National Weather Service is predicting up to five inches of rainfall in spots through Monday night, with intermittent breaks.

2 — Storm water starts rising in neighborhoods near Addicks and Barker dams, Houston Chronicle, 8/28/2017

http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Harvey-flooding-forces-release-from-Addicks-and-12035928.php?utm_content=chron_hp_zonec_hold_v1&ipid=chronhpholdreccos

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water from the Addicks and Barker reservoirs early Monday morning, hours before officials planned to release rainfall from the two dams, according to the Harris County Flood Control District.

3 — Federal emergency declared in 5 Louisiana parishes in anticipation of Harvey, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 8/28/2017

http://www.nola.com/hurricane/index.ssf/2017/08/emergency_declaration_louisian.html#incart_breaking

The declaration includes Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis and Vermilion parishes. It starts Aug. 27 and authorizes the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA to coordinate all disaster relief efforts.

4 — Parts of Louisiana could see rain up to 25 inches as Harvey moves east, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 8/27/2017

http://www.nola.com/hurricane/index.ssf/2017/08/louisiana_harvey_forecast.html#incart_river_home_pop

Forecasters are predicting between 15 to 25 inches of rain in southwestern Louisiana, and 5 to 15 inches in south-central Louisiana through the week as Tropical Storm Harvey is expected to dip back into the Gulf of Mexico and recharge before moving back toward land.

5 — Exxon Mobil shuts down Baytown refining complex, Houston Chronicle, 8/27/2017

<http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Exxon-Mobil-shutting-down-Baytown-refining-complex-12003468.php>

Exxon Mobil is in the process of shutting down the nation's second-largest refining complex in Baytown in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

6 — EPA issues emergency waiver to combat fuel shortage from Hurricane Harvey, Houston Chronicle, 8/26/2017

<http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/EPA-waives-fuel-standards-to-combat-gas-shortages-11969300.php>

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced late Friday it was waiving environmental standards on fuel, "to address shortages resulting from Hurricane Harvey."

7— Officials act to protect downtown Houston from Harvey floods, Houston Chronicle, 8/28/17

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/texas/article/Battered-by-Harvey-Houston-braces-for-even-more-12044845.php>

Officials released more water from Houston-area reservoirs overwhelmed by Harvey early Monday in a move aimed at protecting the city's downtown from devastating floods but that could still endanger thousands of homes, even as the nation's fourth-largest city anticipated more rain.

8 — FEMA Director: Recovery from Harvey will take 'many years', San Antonio Express-News, 8/27/17

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/FEMA-Director-Recovery-from-Harvey-will-take-12035850.php>

Federal Emergency Management Agency Director William "Brock" Long told the Washington Post on Sunday that Hurricane Harvey — the first Category 3 or greater storm to hit the United States in 12 years — could be the worst disaster the state of Texas has ever seen.

9 — Hurricane Harvey Could Also Be a Major Pollution Disaster, New Republic, 8/25/17

<https://newrepublic.com/article/144513/hurricane-harvey-also-major-pollution-disaster>

In the devastating wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, parts of the East Coast were left not only demolished, but polluted. Now, a Category 3 hurricane is heading straight toward Southeast Texas, the heart of the American petrochemical industry.

10 — Port Aransas facing long recovery from Harvey, San Antonio Express-News, 8/28/17

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Port-Aransas-residents-who-stayed-behind-angry-12021678.php>

The normally free-spirited Gulf Coast city of Port Aransas, known for its funky vibe and golf carts cruising along the streets and beaches, was within a 24-hour period brought to its knees.

Other news:

11 — Oklahoma energy firms ready to drill 2-mile horizontal wells, The Oklahoma, 8/25/17

<http://newsok.com/firms-ready-to-drill-2-mile-horizontal-wells/article/5561445>

With a pair of wells in northern Dewey County, Oklahoma City-based Tapstone Energy plans to be one of the first companies to take advantage of a new law allowing horizontal wells up to two miles long in non-shale rock layers.

12 — Louisiana company pleads guilty to dumping hazardous waste in Savannah, WSAV, 8/27/17

<http://wsav.com/2017/08/26/louisiana-company-pleads-guilty-to-dumping-hazardous-waste-in-savannah/>

Boasso America, Inc. (Boasso), headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana, and with a facility in Garden City, Georgia, entered a guilty plea Thursday, August 24 for the illegal transportation and dumping of hazardous waste.

13 — EPA chief backtracks on delaying rules reducing emissions, Farmington Daily-Times, 8/27/17

<http://www.daily-times.com/story/money/industries/oil-gas/2017/08/27/epa-chief-backtracks-delaying-rules-reducing-emissions/580739001/>

One day after 15 states sued him, Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt backtracked on delaying Obama-era rules intended to reduce emissions of smog-causing air pollutants.

14 — Uranium pervades homes on and near Navajo Nation, High Country News, 8/27/17

<http://www.hcn.org/articles/epa-budget-cuts-threaten-to-slow-uranium-cleanup-at-navajo-nation>

Angie Hood grew up in a remote valley tucked along the edge of the Navajo Nation. On hot summer days, Hood and her three siblings would tend to the family's sheep and play football in a steep-banked arroyo. Then, to cool off, they would splash in a pool of water that streamed from a pipe. At the time, the Hood children had no idea they were playing in radioactive waste.

Chron <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-weather/hurricaneharvey/article/Houston-hunkers-to-Harvey-braces-for-long-storm-12003388.php>

A weary Houston likely to endure catastrophic flooding through Wednesday

Houston Chronicle Staff Updated 7:20 am, Monday, August 28, 2017



IMAGE 1 OF 88

Two kayakers try to beat the current pushing them down an overflowing Brays Bayou along South Braeswood Sunday. Harvey's rainfall has been unprecedented.

6:30 a.m.: Department of Homeland Security Update from Washington D.C.

FEMA director Brock Long is headed to Corpus Cristi today.

During a press conference Monday morning, he encouraged people to get involved in relief efforts by going to nvoad.gov to find organizations to which they can donate money.

Long also asked Houstonians to continue to hunker down at home and listen to local officials.

Emergency responders - which now include authorities from the Department of the Interior and Customs and Border Control - have had to rescue locals from their cars, pulling resources away from people who truly need them, Long said.

Long said he expects more than 450,000 disaster victims to register for federal assistance assistance, after President Trump's disaster declaration. In the past 24 hours, FEMA processed nearly 15,000 calls, he said.

Residents in need of assistance can register at disasterassistance.gov or call 1-800-621-FEMA.



"Donate your money," Long said. "Figure out how you can get involved, as we help Texas find a new normal going forward after this devastating disaster."

When asked whether Houston should have had residents evacuate before



"The best information we've been provided at the time," Long said. "The best things to do."

[illegible]

"There are conditions where it's just not safe to fly," Zukunft said.

6 a.m.: Morning update from the National Weather Service

Tropical Storm Harvey is now southeast of Matagorda Bay, and the heaviest bands of rainfall have shifted east of Liberty and Chambers counties.

Still, Houston is likely to endure heavy rain and catastrophic flooding through Wednesday.

On Monday, residents of Harris, Galveston and southern Liberty counties could see 3 to 4 inches of rain, with higher amounts in isolated areas. Up to 6 inches could fall on Chambers County.

In the next three days, more than 15 inches of rain could fall on Harris, Chambers, Liberty, Jefferson and eastern Waller, southeastern Montgomery and southeastern San Jacinto counties.

In the past 48 hours, much of Houston saw over 25 inches of rain. Corpus Cristi saw upwards of 20 inches.

As of Monday morning, up to 40 inches of rain had fallen on northeast Houston alone. Another 20 inches are possible in the area before Tropical Storm Harvey moves further east.

Tropical storm warnings and flash flood emergencies are still in effect. Tornado threats continue for areas of southeast Texas. Liberty, Hardin, Chambers, Jefferson and Orange counties are under tornado watch until 1 p.m. Houston has a marginal threat of tornadoes.

Not much change from the current wind and water level conditions along the coast is expected on Monday. Water levels in at the Matagorday Bay and Galveston Bay entrances and in Freeport and Morgans Point were 1 to 3 feet above normal.

Minor coastal flooding is possible through Wednesday.

5:16 a.m.: Conroe evacuations, continued

Here's an updated list of evacuations for the city of Conroe. City officials on Monday reminded residents that they should only evacuate if it is safe to do so. For assistance, call 936-522-3205.

- McDade Estates - evacuate
- River Plantation - recommended
- Woodhaven Forest - recommended
- Artesian - recommended
- Riverbrook Drive and Sherbrook Circle (East of I45 @ 1488) - recommended
- Neighborhoods off of FM 2854 - recommended
- Neighborhoods downstream from McDade Estates – recommended

For updates, click [here](#).

4:47 a.m.: More rain expected

The National Weather Service expects between 3 and 4 inches of new rainfall on Monday. Monday night could bring an additional 4 inches of rain.

Houston remains under a flash flood warning.

Forecasters are also encouraged by some drier air that has entered the region.

"Some of the short-term, high resolution models suggest the heavier activity will now slowly move off to the northeast of Houston tonight, toward Beaumont and Western Louisiana," a Space City Weather post Monday morning reads. "This may offer a short reprieve for parts of Houston, and truthfully anything is welcome."

4:28 a.m.: Power outage updates

There were 82,842 CenterPoint customers without lights as of 4 a.m. Monday, according to the company's online energy tracker.

One of the hardest hit areas in the city is the West University Place community, where more than 2,500 customers are without power.

For our rolling post on power outages, click [here](#).

4:16 a.m.: 2,500 people in George R. Brown Convention Center

Red Cross Houston says 2,500 people were in the George R. Brown Convention Center as of 3 a.m.

Our Nancy Sarnoff and Greg Morago have a story from last night about the center [here](#).

4:12 a.m.: Fort Bend roads in 'pretty good shape' for those evacuating, official says

Alan Spears, deputy emergency management coordinator of Fort Bend County, said on KTRK this morning that Fort Bend residents who are trying to evacuate due to surging waters would find the roads "in pretty good shape."

"If people need to get out, now is definitely the time," he said. "Granted, it is dark. We prefer people to try and evacuate during the day time, but if the water is down, take that opportunity and leave."

The Brazos, which winds its way across the county, was rising slowly, expected to hit its peak after 4 p.m. Monday.

National Weather Service projections as of late Sunday afternoon expected the river to reach 59 feet, above last year's record 54.7 feet.

4:02 a.m.: Post offices in Houston to close Monday over Harvey

Nearly 20 Houston post offices will be closed Monday as the city remains in the throes of Tropical Storm Harvey.

The city made the decision to close the mail facilities about 2 a.m. Monday as large areas of Houston remain underwater and rain continues to fall.

For a full list of closed post offices, click [here](#).

3:05 a.m.: San Jacinto Bridge flooding

Flooding is "imminent" at the San Jacinto Bridge at State 105, the city of Conroe said early Monday morning, as massive amounts of water flowed from the Lake Conroe Dam.

The city closed FM 2854 in advance of the expected flooding. FM1097 remains open and is the "best route," the city said in a press release.

State 105 was open as of 6 a.m. Monday.

2:45: Record rainfall at Bush airport

A record daily max rainfall of 16.07 inches was set at Bush Intercontinental Airport Sunday, shattering the previous record of 8.32 inches set in 1945, according to the National Weather Service. Additionally, a record daily max rainfall of 7.45 inches was set at College Station Sunday easily breaking the prior record of 1.35 inches set in 1977.

Another stat: The National Weather Service later said that Houston IAH received 46.16" of rain from June 1 to Aug. 27 of this year. The city's annual average rainfall is 49.77."

1:57 a.m.: Evacuations near Lake Conroe

The city of Conroe is calling for immediate evacuations in some neighborhoods, including McDade Estates, around Lake Conroe as record levels of water are being released from the dam, according to a press release from the city.

A flash flood warning is also in effect for Conroe residents.

Public safety officials serving the Conroe area have been overwhelmed by the volume of emergency calls and are prioritizing them as they come in. City officials urge those who are not evacuating to stay indoors.

1:20 a.m.: Flash Flood Warning

A Flash Flood Warning is in effect for most of the Houston and surrounding area, from as far south as La Marque to north of The Woodlands, until 4:15 a.m, according to the National Weather Service. This includes all of Houston and more than 5.2 million people.

1:10 a.m.: Flood gauges lost

Five flood gauges have been lost in Harvey's wake, said Jeff Lindner, a meteorologist with the Harris County Flood Control District early Monday morning.

And he said on Twitter that he expects more will go out of service.

These gauges are useful in tracking where waters are above banks around the county. You can track the water levels bayou by bayou [here](#).

Several markers around the map show that storm damage has taken the gauges out of service.

12:45 a.m.: Addicks and Barker reservoirs released early

Just before 12:30 a.m. Jeff Lindner with the Harris County Flood Control District announced that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water from the Addicks and Barker reservoirs. The release is a couple of hours earlier for Addicks than what was initially announced and nearly 12 hours earlier than planned for Barker. Story is developing.

Story by our John Harden [here](#).

12:30 a.m.: Lake Conroe releasing water at record rates

Lake Conroe received an average of 18 inches of rainfall over the first 72 hours of the storm, bringing the lake water level over 4.25 feet above the normal levels. The San Jacinto River Authority has increased the rate of release to a record 39,600 cubic feet per second, surpassing the 1994 record of 33,300 cubic feet per second.

The SJRA urged residents around Lake Conroe to secure all watercraft.

Story by our Fernando Alfonso [here](#).

12:16 a.m.: Story: Series of evacuations forced after heavy rains early Sunday night

Heavy rainfall between 3 to 4 inches Sunday night forced regional authorities to issue a series of mandatory and voluntary evacuations, asking residents in impacted areas to leave overnight or early Monday morning.

The lingering rains left by the remnants of Hurricane Harvey returned by 9 p.m. with portions of west and central Harris County experiencing unprecedented flooding, according to the National Weather Service.

The threat of structural damage, a bridge collapsing and levees overflowing have officials worried that more residents will become trapped by the storm if they don't take action.

Our Bridget Balch and John Harden have the story [here](#).

12:11 a.m.: Waller County says 88 roads 'impassable'

Waller County officials said early Monday morning that "numerous" flood rescues and evacuations from rising waters were underway.

The county's emergency management office said on Twitter that drivers should avoid the area. More than 88 roads, it said in the post, were "impassable."

12:03 a.m.: Fort Bend again urges those living in evacuation areas to heed calls

"Continued rainfall will cause flooding and road closures," the county's Office of Emergency Management wrote on Twitter early Monday morning. "If you are under a mandatory evacuation order, leave ASAP before conditions worsen."

Recall that this agency upgraded the evacuation status for those in certain low-lying areas along the Brazos River from voluntary to mandatory on Sunday, urging residents to pack belongings quickly and leave.

While rain continued to drench the area, the major threat remained a day away. The Brazos, which winds its way across the county, was rising slowly, expected to hit its peak after 4 p.m. Monday.

National Weather Service projections as of late Sunday afternoon expected the river to reach 59 feet, above last year's record 54.7 feet.

11:53 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 28: Story: An unprecedented storm spares few parts of Houston region

Thousands of people abandoned their inundated homes and apartments by boat, helicopter and foot on Sunday, carrying children, pets and plastic bags full of belongings. Mishaps were unavoidable. Besides the half-dozen people believed to have died in the storm, more than a dozen were treated for injuries, officials said.

Although some places were hit harder than others, no point on the compass was spared. Pretty much everyone in the greater Houston area and points beyond woke up Sunday to unprecedented images of inundation. With water rising, rain expected to fall throughout Sunday night, and the remnants of Harvey remaining very much around, daybreak Monday could present more of the same. Wash, rinse, repeat.

The desperate condition of one of the country's biggest metropolitan areas — all of it sitting on a flat coastal plain — became increasingly clear as Sunday wore on. Motorists who left to assist family members or try to escape their own flooded homes found themselves trapped on freeways, unable to exit. Some who stayed in places where the water kept rising were forced to move up as high as they could, often on rooftops, in hopes of rescue.

Our Mike Tolson threads together stories reported across the city [here](#).

10:58 p.m.: More flooding along Buffalo Bayou

Chron <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Harvey-flooding-forces-release-from-Addicks-and-12035928.php>

Storm water starts rising in neighborhoods near Addicks and Barker dams

By Lindsay Ellis, Houston Chronicle and John D. Harden Updated 3:13 am, Monday, August 28, 2017

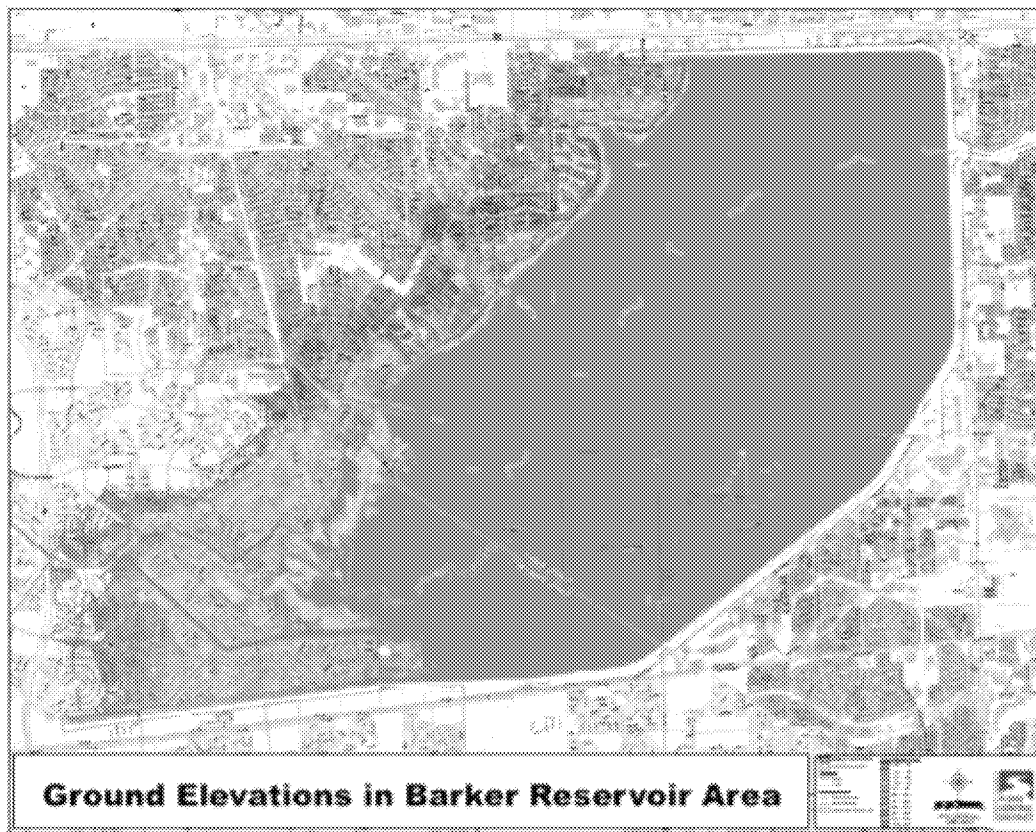


IMAGE 1 OF 248

The ground elevations in Barker Reservoir area.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water from the Addicks and Barker reservoirs early Monday morning, hours before officials planned to release rainfall from the two dams, according to the Harris County Flood Control District.

The flood control district reported almost an hour later that storm water has started rising in the neighborhoods adjacent to Addicks and Barker. Heavy rainfall forced reservoir officials to begin releasing water from the dams sooner than previously planned.

Col. Lars N. Zetterstrom with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had announced late Sunday afternoon that rising levels in the two reservoirs would force authorities to release water from both dams.

The rising tides within the dams are forcing the water to swell and spill upstream into neighboring communities that sit against the dams.

RESOURCES: Stay up-to-date with forecasts, traffic reports, water levels, etc.

Based on the corps data, the rising waters could place residents in low-lying homes in dangerous situations. He said the measures were necessary to prevent uncontrolled releases.

"We will have to release water to reduce the risk flooding in the Houston metropolitan area," he said. "Until we realize the actual rise we can't predict how many homes would be impacted."

Several thousand homes sit in the voluntary evacuation zone. Homeowners near the reservoirs will likely have water seep into their homes prior to the release as the swell continues through the night.

Residents upstream of the dam will begin seeing street flooding first. Then low-lying homes could begin taking in water.

Both Addicks and Barker collect water from streams and rivers that flow through Harris and Fort Bend counties. The surge of water created by Tropical Storm Harvey has resulted in the dams filling up quickly to the point of failure if water isn't released.



Photo: Michael Ciaglo, Staff

Park Ranger David Mackintosh enters the water control structure on Barker reservoir. Development upstream is causing the 70-year-old reservoir to fill up faster and hold water longer. Below, water flows down the spillway of the Barker dam into Buffalo Bayou.

The water released from the dam will flow into an already bulging Buffalo Bayou and then eventually drain into the Houston Ship Channel.

This could lead to additional damage to structures along the bayou. Officials have not issued a voluntary evacuation for people living along the bayou, but residents should be cautious.

Fort Bend County issued the evacuation for portions of the county later Sunday.

Each dam will be set to release about 4,000 cubic feet of water per second, about double what they release during normal operations, and they will stay open for several weeks, Zetterstrom said. But even that release won't be enough to ease the dam because water flowing in from northern Harris County and Fort Bend is greater than the water released.

Officials are hoping the dying storm system will provide some relief and allow for greater releases as the week progresses.

All roads around the dams will be closed prior to releases.

Zetterstrom said the water taken in by the dam from the storms is unparalleled and will exceed records set in 2015 and 2016.

He said weather models shows that water would begin rising 4 to 6 inches an hour by early Monday morning.

VITAL LINE OF DEFENSE: *Addicks and Barker were built to protect the heart of the city by controlling the flow of water along Buffalo Bayou. Things haven't gone as planned. What's at stake is the safety of the nation's fourth-largest city. If the dams failed, half of Houston would be underwater. Under the worst scenario at Addicks, property damages could reach \$22.7 billion and 6,928 people could die. Read our story on the dams here.*

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H E A R S T

HURRICANE NEWS AND STORM TRACKING

Federal emergency declared in 5 Louisiana parishes in anticipation of Harvey

2

Updated on August 28, 2017 at 8:31 AM

Posted on August 28, 2017 at 7:57 AM

96
shares**By Carlie Kollath Wells,** cwells@nola.com.

NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

President Donald Trump on Monday morning (Aug. 28) issued an emergency declaration for five Louisiana parishes in anticipation of Tropical Storm Harvey hitting, according to the governor's office.

The declaration includes Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis and Vermilion parishes. It starts Aug. 27 and authorizes the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA to coordinate all disaster relief efforts.

"Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize and provide at its discretion equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency," the White House statement said.

Emergency protective measures, including direct federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent federal funding, the White House said.

Gov. John Bel Edwards on Sunday sent a letter to the president, asking him to issue the emergency disaster declaration for the five parishes. Louisiana will request that additional parishes be added to the request as warranted, according to the governor's office.

"Tropical Storm Harvey is causing severe damage along the Gulf Coast, and we are expecting significant damage in Louisiana, particularly in Southwest Louisiana," said Edwards in a released statement.

Monday morning, Harvey already was dropping torrential rain on Lake Charles. Tornado and flash flood warnings were in effect for the area.

Edwards also noted Louisiana first responders are at work to provide services like search and rescue, transportation to shelters and logistical support.

William J. Doran III has been named the federal coordinating officer for recovery operations.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 28, 2017


President Donald J. Trump Approves Louisiana Emergency Declaration

Today, President Donald J. Trump declared that an emergency exists in the State of Louisiana and ordered Federal assistance to supplement State, tribal, and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from Tropical Storm Harvey beginning on August 27, 2017, and continuing.

The President's action authorizes the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to coordinate all disaster relief efforts. This action will help alleviate the hardship and suffering that the emergency has inflicted on the local population, and provide appropriate assistance for required emergency measures, authorized under Title V of the Stafford Act, to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, and to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in the parishes of Bourgeois, Calcasieu, Calumet, Jefferson Davis, and Vermilion.

Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide at its discretion equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. Emergency protective measures, including direct Federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent Federal funding.

Brock Long, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security, named William J. Doran III as the Federal Coordinating Officer for Federal recovery operations in the affected areas.

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JUST IN: Pres. Trump approves Louisiana emergency declaration in response to #Harvey abcnews.com/2wWabQ2

7:42 AM - Aug 28, 2017

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Carlie Kollath Wells is a morning reporter at NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune. Have an early-bird tip? Send it to her: cwells@nola.com or Twitter [@carlie_kollath](https://twitter.com/carlie_kollath).

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HURRICANE NEWS AND STORM TRACKING

Parts of Louisiana could see rain up to 25 inches as Harvey moves east

7

Updated on August 27, 2017 at 11:12 PM

Posted on August 27, 2017 at 11:11 PM

1.8k
shares**By Marie Simoneaux**

NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

Forecasters are predicting between 15 to 25 inches of rain in southwestern Louisiana, and 5 to 15 inches in south-central Louisiana through the week as Tropical Storm Harvey is expected to dip back into the Gulf of Mexico and recharge before moving back toward land, according to the National Hurricane Center's 10 p.m. update Sunday (Aug. 27).

Winds are expected to reach a maximum of 40 mph in Louisiana. Forecasters predict strong swells to affect the coasts of Texas and Louisiana that are likely to cause life-threatening surf conditions.


As the system nears the New Orleans metro area, scattered rainfalls of near 2 inches per hour are possible.

An earlier National Hurricane Center advisory said local rainfalls of three to five inches could "cause issues" in the metro area.

Forecasters predict rain late Sunday night, with up to an inch of rain possible overnight. Through the week, anywhere between four to 10 inches of rain are possible in the metro area.

Some tornadoes are also possible through Monday in parts of southwest Louisiana.

At 10 p.m. Sunday, the center of Tropical Storm Harvey was located near Victoria, Texas and moving east-southeast at speeds near 3 mph.

 <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Exxon-Mobil-shutting-down-Baytown-refining-complex-12003468.php>

Exxon Mobil shuts down Baytown refining complex

Jordan Blum, Houston Chronicle Updated 2:03 pm, Sunday, August 27, 2017



Exxon Mobil is in the process of shutting down the nation's second-largest refining complex in Baytown in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

The Baytown campus, which also produces petrochemicals, can churn through up to 560,000 barrels of oil a day to produce fuel. The refinery is a major source of the Gulf Coast and nation's gasoline supplies. Baytown also serves as a major petrochemical hub that's undergoing a massive expansion.

RELATED: Chevron Phillips closing massive Baytown chemical complex

"Safety is our first priority, and we have taken all the precautions to minimize impact to community and employees throughout the shutdown process," Exxon Mobil spokeswoman Suann Guthrie said.

Previously, refineries were shuttered temporarily in Corpus Christi by Valero Energy, Citgo Petroleum and Flint Hills Resources before Hurricane Harvey made landfall. Now, some of the Houston refining corridor is beginning to close.

More than 25 percent of the nation's fuel supplies are produced along the Texas Gulf Coast.

RELATED: Shell halts operations at Deer Park refinery

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Chron <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/EPA-waives-fuel-standards-to-combat-gas-shortages-11969300.php>

EPA issues emergency waiver to combat fuel shortage from Hurricane Harvey

Published 7:45 am, Saturday, August 26, 2017



IMAGE 1 OF 2

Customers fuel vehicles at a Sunoco LP gas station ahead of Hurricane Harvey in Texas City, Texas, U.S., on Friday, Aug. 25, 2017. Hurricane Harvey strengthened as it headed toward landfall in Texas, forecast

... more

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced late Friday it was waiving environmental standards on fuel, "to address shortages resulting from Hurricane Harvey."

"Extreme and unusual fuel supply circumstances exist in portions of Texas as a result of the hurricane," the agency said. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, "has granted a temporary waiver to help ensure an adequate supply of gasoline is available in the affected areas until normal supply to the region can be restored."

As the Chronicle reported Friday:

Some gas stations are running out of fuel - at least temporarily - as Hurricane Harvey moves closer to landfall.

In the Houston area, some of the outages include fueling stations in Katy, Sugar Land and The Woodlands as people wait in long lines to fill up their tanks before Harvey arrives, according to data available at GasBuddy's tracker.gasbuddy.com.

ADVERTISEMENT

Prices already are rising as Corpus Christi refineries shut down, and fuel costs could spike by as much as 25 cents a gallon within the next week or so, said Patrick DeHaan, GasBuddy senior petroleum analyst. The Houston-area average was still about \$2.12 for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline as of Friday morning.

The larger spikes will only occur if refineries also shut down in the Houston and Galveston areas, he said.

"The buck stops with Houston." Much unethical - or illegal - price gouging is unlikely though, he said. "Usually, gas stations have a lot of eyes on them," DeHaan said. "If it happens, it's usually just a few bad apples."

ADVERTISEMENT

RELATED STORY: Hurricane Harvey forces some refineries closed, pushes gas prices up

The waiver extends through Sept. 15 and applies to any county declared a disaster area by Governor Greg Abbott.

"EPA is continuing to actively monitor the fuel supply situation as a result of Hurricane Harvey, and is ready to act expeditiously if extreme and unusual supply circumstances exist in other areas," the agency said.

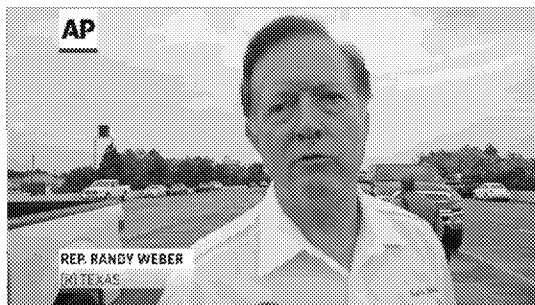
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 <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/texas/article/Battered-by-Harvey-Houston-braces-for-even-more-12044845.php>

Officials act to protect downtown Houston from Harvey floods

Michael Graczyk, Associated Press Updated 8:02 am, Monday, August 28, 2017



HOUSTON (AP) — Officials released more water from Houston-area reservoirs overwhelmed by Harvey early Monday in a move aimed at protecting the city's downtown from devastating floods but that could still endanger thousands of homes, even as the nation's fourth-largest city anticipated more rain.

hurricane and has lingered dropping heavy rain as a tropical storm, sent rising water chased thousands of people to rooftops or higher ground and constant calls for help.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Brock Long said during a news conference Monday that 50 counties in Texas are affected by the flooding and that a tremendous amount of rainfall is in the cards for southwest Louisiana. The rain and floods have been blamed in at least two deaths.

Residents living near the Addicks and Barker reservoirs — that were designed to prevent flooding in downtown Houston — were warned Sunday that a controlled release from both reservoirs would cause additional street flooding that could spill into homes. Rising water levels and continuing rain was putting pressure on the dams that could fail without the release. Harris and Fort Bend county officials advised residents to pack their cars Sunday night and leave in the morning.

"When the sun comes up, get out," said Jeff Lindner, a meteorologist for the Harris County Flood Control District. "And you don't have to go far, you just need to get out of this area."

The Army Corps of Engineers started the reservoir releases before 2 a.m. Monday — ahead of schedule — because water levels were increasing at a rate of more than 6 inches (15 centimeters) per hour, Corps spokesman Jay Townsend said.



IMAGE 1 OF 20

A car is submerged on a freeway flooded by Tropical Storm Harvey on Sunday, Aug. 27, 2017, near downtown Houston, Texas. The remnants of Hurricane Harvey sent devastating floods pouring into Houston ... [more](#)

Officials in Fort Bend County, Houston's southwestern suburbs, late Sunday issued mandatory evacuation orders along the Brazos River levee districts. County officials were preparing for the river to reach major flood stages late Sunday. County Judge Robert Herbert said at a news conference that National Weather Service officials were predicting that the water could rise to 59 feet (18 meters), three feet (90 centimeters) above 2016 records and what Herbert called an "800-year flood level." Herbert said that amount of water would top the levees and carries a threat of levee failure.

On Sunday, incessant rain covered much of Houston in turbid, gray-green water and turned streets into rivers navigable only by boat. In a rescue effort that recalled the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, helicopters landed near flooded freeways, airboats buzzed across submerged neighborhoods and high-water vehicles plowed through water-logged intersections. Some people managed with kayaks or canoes or swam.

Volunteers joined emergency teams in pulling people from their homes or from the water. Authorities urged people to get on top of their houses to avoid becoming trapped in attics and to wave sheets or towels to draw attention to their location.

Police Chief Art Acevedo said Monday that drainage remains a concern.

"I'm not sure where the water is going because it's just so much that we can't really absorb more in the ground at this point. ... We have way too much water and not enough places for it to drain," Acevedo told MSNBC's "Morning Joe."

And on the possibility of the rain subsiding, he said: "We're just keeping our fingers crossed"

As the water rose, the National Weather Service issued another ominous forecast: Before the storm is gone, some parts of Houston and its suburbs could get as much as 50 inches (1.3 meters) of rain. That would be the highest amount ever recorded in Texas.

FEMA's Long predicted that the aftermath of the storm would require FEMA's involvement for years.

"This disaster's going to be a landmark event," Long said.

The National Weather Service meanwhile warned that the catastrophic flooding would worsen due to heavy rainfall in the coming days and that it would be slow to recede once Harvey finally moves on. Director Louis Uccellini said during a news conference Monday that up to 20 inches (51 centimeters) of rain could fall in the coming days, on top of the more than 30 inches (76 centimeters) some places have already seen.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards requested a federal emergency disaster declaration in a letter to the White House, underlining that parts of the state likely to be affected by Harvey are still recovering from devastating flooding in 2016.

It was not clear how many people have been plucked from the floodwaters in Texas. Up to 1,200 people had to be rescued in Galveston County alone, said Mark Henry, the county judge. Rescuers were giving priority to life-and-death situations, leaving many affected families to fend for themselves. And several hospitals in the Houston area were evacuated due to the rising waters.

Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center was quickly opened as a shelter. It was also used as a shelter for Katrina refugees in 2005.

Gillis Leho arrived there soaking wet. She said she awoke Sunday to find her downstairs flooded. She moved some belongings upstairs then grabbed her grandchildren.

"We had to bust a window to get out," Leho said.

Some people used inflatable beach toys, rubber rafts and even air mattresses to get through the water to safety. Others waded while carrying trash bags stuffed with their belongings and small animals in picnic coolers.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said authorities had received more than 2,000 calls for help and urged drivers to stay off the roads.

"I don't need to tell anyone this is a very, very serious and unprecedented storm," Turner said.

The deteriorating situation was bound to provoke questions about the conflicting advice given by the governor and Houston leaders before the hurricane. Gov. Greg Abbott urged people to flee from Harvey's path, but the Houston mayor issued no evacuation orders and told everyone to stay home.

The governor refused to point fingers on Sunday.

"Now is not the time to second-guess the decisions that were made," Abbott, a Republican, said at a news conference in Austin. "What's important is that everybody work together to ensure that we are going to, first, save lives and, second, help people across the state rebuild."

The mayor, a Democrat, defended his decision, citing the risk of sending the city's 2.3 million inhabitants onto the highways at the same time.

"If you think the situation right now is bad, and you give an order to evacuate, you are creating a nightmare," Turner said.

The Coast Guard deployed five helicopters and asked for additional aircraft from New Orleans.

The White House said President Donald Trump would visit Texas on Tuesday. He met Sunday by teleconference with top administration officials to discuss federal support for response and recovery efforts.

The rescues unfolded a day after Harvey settled over the Texas coastline. The system weakened Saturday to a tropical storm. By early Monday, Harvey had shifted a little closer to the coast, hovering about 20 miles (30 kilometers) east of Victoria, with sustained winds of about 40 mph (65 kph). The National Hurricane Center said it continued to edge in a southeasterly direction at 3 mph (4.8 kph).

Harvey was the fiercest hurricane to hit the U.S. in 13 years and the strongest to strike Texas since 1961's Hurricane Carla, the most powerful Texas hurricane on record.

Associated Press writers Carla K. Johnson in Chicago; Juan Lozano, Josh Replogle and Robert Ray in Houston; Peter Banda in Dickinson, Texas; and Jamie Stengle and Claudia Lauer in Dallas contributed to this report.

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HEARST

FEMA Director: Recovery from Harvey will take 'many years'

Graham Watson, Staff writer | August 27, 2017 | Updated: August 27, 2017 6:07pm

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Photo: Robert Gauthier/Los Angeles Times

IMAGE 1 OF 18

Tropical Storm Harvey creates epic flooding throughout Houston and Southeast Texas. (Photo by Robert Gauthier/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)

Federal Emergency Management Agency Director William "Brock" Long told the Washington Post on Sunday that Hurricane Harvey — the first Category 3 or greater storm to hit the United States in 12 years — could be the worst disaster the state of Texas has ever seen.

"This will be a devastating disaster, probably the worst disaster the state's seen," Long told The Washington Post on Sunday in a telephone interview from FEMA headquarters in Washington.

"The recovery to this event is going to last many years, to be able to help Texas and the people impacted by this event achieve a new normal."

Long's sentiments echoed an earlier tweet from the National Weather Service (NWS) that said: "This event is unprecedented & all impacts are unknown & beyond anything experienced."

Long told the paper that 5,000 federal employees were supporting local and state disaster relief efforts in Texas. He said the groups were working in a unified effort after President Donald Trump signed a federal disaster declaration for the state.

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The White House announced that President Donald Trump would visit Texas on Tuesday.

Harvey had been downgraded from a Hurricane to a tropical storm, but that hasn't hampered its devastating effects. It has settled over the city of Houston and some of the surrounding cities and has caused catastrophic flooding. According to the NWS, Houston and surrounding areas has received more than 30 inches of rain in the past 48 hours.

"I know for a fact this is the worst flood Houston has ever experienced," Patrick Blood, a National Weather Service meteorologist, told the Houston Chronicle. "Worse than (Tropical Storm) Allison. It's so widespread."

The NWS said that as much as 50 inches of rain could be dumped on parts of South Texas and Blood told the Chronicle that he thinks the Houston area could receive 15 to 25 inches during the next few days.

Oddly, Long was concerned about this type of cataclysmic event well before Harvey was on anyone's radar and said as much in an interview a few weeks ago.

"You know what's keeping me up at night? Long said. "This country has not been hit by a major hurricane since 2005."

Emergency crews in Houston have been responding to 911 calls all day as people remained trapped because of the rising water. Some sought refuge on roofs while they waited for help while others used kayaks, canoes or boats to get to safety. Volunteers helped overwhelmed emergency crews with the rescues and some people around the Houston area donated boats and jet skis to help.

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David J. Phillip-Pool/Getty Images

Hurricane Harvey Could Also Be a Major Pollution Disaster

The powerful storm is headed straight toward the heart of the American petrochemical industry, while a key EPA response position remains unfilled.

BY EMILY ATKIN

August 25, 2017

In the devastating wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, parts of the East Coast were left not only demolished, but polluted. Wastewater treatment plants lost power and discharged 11 billion gallons of sewage into receiving waters. The toxic Gowanus Canal—a Superfund site—flooded and overflowed into people’s homes, covering people and possessions in what one victim called a “greasy, oily slick.” Homeowners’ personal heating oil tanks broke apart and oozed fuel into the soil.

That was Sandy, a Category 1 hurricane. Now, a Category 3 hurricane is heading straight toward Southeast Texas, the heart of the American petrochemical industry. It’s the nightmare situation Roy Scranton warned about in his 2016 op-ed for the *New York Times*, titled “When the Next Hurricane Hits Texas.” If a storm rips through the region, it will hit an area that includes roughly one third of the country’s known oil and natural gas reserves. And there’s more: “The refineries and plants encircling Galveston Bay are responsible for roughly 25 percent of the United States’s petroleum refining, more than 44 percent of its ethylene production, 40 percent of its specialty chemical feed stock and more than half of its jet fuel.”

A powerful hurricane could disrupt oil and chemical production, Scranton wrote, and in turn domestic and world markets. On Thursday, oil prices were already going haywire as refineries in Corpus Christi shut down ahead of Harvey. That's a real concern, but it's not the only reason we should be watching the refineries. There is a huge environmental risk to this storm. If the "biblical event" predicted materializes in this densely packed industrial area, "it may impact the Gulf Coast oil refineries and chemical plants," said Judith Enck, who served as administrator for EPA's Region 2 during Hurricane Sandy. "I am extremely concerned about the path of Hurricane Harvey."

Oil and chemical companies are concerned too. LyondellBassell, one of the largest chemical and refining companies, said in a statement that it is preparing for "potential flooding" of its many Houston-area sites. Anadarko Petroleum and ExxonMobil have started evacuating workers from the region's offshore oil drilling platforms, which together spilled a total of 741,000 gallons of oil during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One analyst told industry publication ICIS that five or six refineries could be directly hit by the storm.

Environmental advocates are also worried that Harvey will create long-term public health problems due to accidental toxic substance releases, and not just from refineries and power plants. In the 30 counties where a disaster has been declared, there are dozens of Superfund sites, many of which are essentially waste pits containing harmful chemicals. The San Jacinto River Waste Pits, for example, contain carcinogenic dioxins, which are linked to birth defects. Advocates also rightly point out that communities living closest to all these sites—both the Superfunds and the refineries—are disproportionately low-income and minority. "This is an environmental justice issue," Enck said.

This type of risk is inherent in any major hurricane, especially one that is slated to hit a major population center. But Enck says it is compounded by the fact that President Trump has not appointed an administrator for EPA's Region 6, which covers both Southeast Texas and Louisiana. "Career staff will do a good job, but this is a situation where real leadership is needed," Enck said, recalling her own experience. During Sandy, she said, her position was "round the clock." As the agency works to solve multiple pollution events at once after a storm, "The regional administrator troubleshoots and is the interface with the state environmental agencies, regional staff, and the EPA in Washington," Enck said. "FEMA is in the lead, but EPA plays a crucial role."

Fortunately, the acting administrator in EPA's Region 6 office at the moment appears experienced in responding to natural disasters that result in environmental catastrophe. According to the agency's website, Samuel Coleman, "guided EPA's response to Hurricane Katrina as the agency's senior federal official in New Orleans, leading EPA's emergency response and recovery missions." In 2009 Coleman was awarded a Meritorious Presidential Rank Award for his work on Katrina.

This is a stroke of luck for Trump, who has been so preoccupied with the superficial drama of his presidency that he's barely mentioned the coming storm at all. Hopefully, the communities in the path of Harvey will all be just as lucky. But the future impact of Trump's dismal policy agenda—which so far has increased the risk of environmental disaster without increasing disaster preparation—gives us something else to worry about. Even if the president can manage on Friday to curb his theatrics and focus on the storm of the decade, it's unlikely that an environmental disaster will be anywhere near the front of his mind.

Emily Atkin is a staff writer at the *New Republic*. [@emorwee](#)



<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Port-Aransas-residents-who-stayed-behind-angry-12021678.php>

Port Aransas facing long recovery from Harvey

By Lynn Brezosky Updated 12:44 am, Monday, August 28, 2017



IMAGE 1 OF 344

Janet Calvert walks past homes that were destroyed in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Port Aransas, Texas on Sunday, Aug. 27, 2017. Calvert was amongst several residents who decided to stay instead of ... more

PORT ARANSAS — The normally free-spirited Gulf Coast city of Port Aransas, known for its funky vibe and golf carts cruising along the streets and beaches, was within a 24-hour period brought to its knees.

Many of the roofs and sides of buildings housing restaurants and novelty shops on the barrier island collapsed under the force of Harvey's 130-mph winds, leaving gas pumps strewn on their sides and mobile homes tossed like abandoned toys.

One access road to the island was rendered impassable by water that Saturday was pooled chest-deep, prompting search and rescue crews to roam on boats from home to home to make sure no one was trapped in the dwellings.

The other was blocked by police. Port Aransas is under mandatory evacuation, but a few reporters were allowed in Sunday to survey the devastation.

The island was a mess.



A liquor store was left a pile of broken signage and crumpled roofing, bottles strewn across the lot. Power lines sagged over sand-

ees and locals who waited on d. and it was easily going to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Not a single business was operating Sunday morning, though a CVS on the outer edge of town was able to open later in the day. The entire community was left without water, power or cell service.

“The emotional toll of what’s happened to our friends and families is indescribable,” Police Chief Scott Burroughs said.

City Manager David Pearson posted to social media that “most all structures are compromised to some level.”

Some damage reports that circulated on Twitter named waterfront favorites like Virginia's on the Bay, Shorty's docks and Trout Street. City officials said it probably would be Tuesday before they would allow in people with Port Aransas driver licenses and/or those listed on Nueces County tax rolls as owning a homestead property.

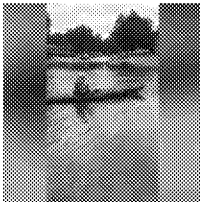
As of Sunday, police were getting assistance from state troopers, the National Guard and Parks and Wildlife. They were there to check on people and provide medical emergency services as needed.

“If a building’s falling down, that’s obviously a concern to” rescue crews, police Sgt. Mike Hanson said. “If the house is upright, we’re just knocking on the door.”

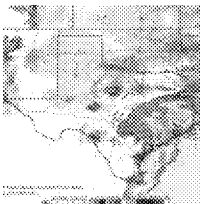
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No fatalities were reported in Port Aransas, despite it being belted by some of the strongest force of Harvey, which had churned into a monster Category 4 hurricane when it finally made landfall.

But as the sky cleared Sunday, there was concern about looting and the growing anxiousness of those who didn't heed the warning to evacuate and now were stuck on the island without power, plumbing, phone service and — in some cases — food and water.

Melanie Zurawski, one of about 100 folks who stayed on the island despite the calls to evacuate, just wanted a cup of coffee Sunday morning. She broke down in frustrated, angry tears when officials at the Civic Center, which was being used as the emergency operations center, told her there wasn't enough to go around.

“Give me a (expletive) break. I can't get a cup of coffee? I live here,” she said. “We've lost everything. We didn't have the means to leave. ... Us people that live here and support this island don't make a lot of money. So a lot of us stayed behind to go board up resorts and whatnot to make money. And by that time it was too late” to leave.

Police said they were doing all they could, and a compassionate first responder ultimately handed her his own cup of coffee. Some people were allowed to come

in and charge their phones and make calls, but for now the assistance had to stop there.

“Our emergency responders don’t even have everything they need,” Hanson said. “So without a shelter, how can we also provide for a town? We can’t even provide for ourselves.”

“Right now, we’re still in mandatory evacuation,” Hannon said. “We have a lot of things down. ... We’ve got hanging down power lines, there’s hazards everywhere.

“We did a mandatory evacuation for many reasons,” he added. “The primary reason was safety. You can see just by looking outside what the impact is. Port Aransas is an island. We don’t have a hospital. We don’t have a lot of resources that the mainland has.”

Vans and regional transportation authority buses were made available, Hannon said, but officials weren’t about to “put a hand on people” to force them to leave.

Zurawski was told Sunday to “just leave the island,” but she said she had nowhere to go. Her first-floor apartment was left a soggy tumble of belongings. The force of the wind had flipped the refrigerator on its side, and tables, chairs, lampshades and clothing were reduced to a tangled junk pile.

During the storm, she and several others took refuge in the uninhabited apartment upstairs, where they planned to ride it out despite lacking power and water.

Half the building’s outer wall had blown out, and during the storm, they feared the inner wall was next. When the water started rising fast up the stairwell, they were sure they were dead.

She picked up one of the makeshift ropes they’d strung together out of torn sheets. It was to keep themselves together in case the roof collapsed, to better the chances they’d all be found.

“It was a roller coaster,” Zurawski said. “That’s how we were for four hours. A roller coaster, bouncing, bouncing, bouncing.”

Terry Elks, who walked barefoot to the emergency operations center because he'd lost most of his clothes, said he felt he had no choice but to stay. Almost every trailer was flipped on its side by the storm, including his.

"All that I have is my vehicle, my RV, and my girlfriend. We helped everybody in the park get out and then we got stuck," he said. "The city told us they had a bus coming and you have 30 minutes."

Elks and his friend missed the bus.

Robert Ramsey, a remodeling contractor, thought his house on stilts would be fine. It was, but Harvey put it to the test.

"I looked outside my window to see what was going on outside and I was like holy. ... There was probably about 8 feet of water underneath my house," he said. "And then it kept on coming up, started hitting the floor, the bottom of our house you could feel it hitting the waves."

Ramsey was prepared to go up to his attic if necessary.

"I just had my battery-operated Sawzall and I was ready to put a hole up in the attic if the water was coming up any higher," he said.

With his commercial truck floating on its side and his tools strewn about, covered in salt water, Ramsey knew he'd have plenty of work in the months ahead.

"I ain't leaving," he said. "I'm fixing this place up."

For now, Ramsey and several others were camping out, cooking on the barbecue what meat they had under ice in their freezers. On Saturday, they made pork chops. Sunday was going to be deer meat.

Some of the luckier residents took refuge in the Place Hotel, which survived the storm mostly intact.

A handful of people sat outside the front of the hotel, heating what had been frozen pizzas over a gas grill.

"I think if anybody's angry, they're angry at the situation," Kathy Wilson said.

Her biggest concern was that without cell service, she hadn't been able to tell family in Dallas that she was OK.

"It's fair to say we had warnings," Wilson said. "Some of us didn't have a place to go. Some of us chose, like me, to stay, and now it's just the aftermath."

Port Aransas primarily is a vacation community. The beach houses and condominiums are mostly owned by people who live in San Antonio and Austin.

"If we don't have a lot of people that we don't have to worry about with medical care and things like that, we can very easily drive around and make sure that people aren't going through people's homes," Sgt. Hannon said. "No one's supposed to be here, so we can say you're not supposed to be here, do you need help? And if they are doing something like opening someone's house, we can assess that."

Zurawski and others learned, for example, that the bottles strewn outside the demolished Spanky's Liquor were not fair game.

"The cops came up and said, 'Where'd you get that liquor,'" she said. "I said, 'It floated over.' They said, 'Can I get your ID?' I said, 'That all floated out somewhere, too. At least let us get drunk.'"

But police officer Kelly Hansen had another take.

"It's not theirs," he said.

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H E A R S T

Oklahoma energy firms ready to drill 2-mile horizontal wells



by Adam Wilmoth • Published: August 25, 2017 5:00 AM CDT • Updated: August 25, 2017 5:00 AM CDT

With a pair of wells in northern Dewey County, Oklahoma City-based Tapstone Energy plans to be one of the first companies to take advantage of a new law allowing horizontal wells up to two miles long in non-shale rock layers.

"It means a lot to us," said Bob Costello, Tapstone's general counsel and vice president of land. "We're excited to see what happens."

Because of the emergency designation attached to Senate Bill 867, companies could begin the process of drilling long wells on Thursday.

Tapstone employees expect to file their paperwork with the Oklahoma Corporation Commission next week and plan to start drilling its first such longer wells in late October and early November, Costello said.

'Everything is improved'

Horizontal wells up to two miles long essentially double the production for a marginal increase in the cost of the wells, boosting the wells' profits.

"Everything is improved through two-mile wells in terms of efficiencies and costs," Costello said. "This is going to be new ground for us drilling two miles in that type of rock. Our drilling people are confident it can go without a hitch."

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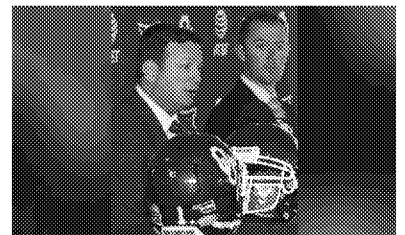
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Companies have been drilling up to two-mile laterals in shale rock layers since the Legislature approved the practice in 2011. SB 867 passed earlier this year extends the ability to all producing rock layers.

While many of the larger producers have described long laterals as a financial windfall for companies, mineral owners and state coffers, some smaller vertical well operators warned that the process could damage their existing wells. Oklahoma's force-pooling laws add to the concerns because Oklahoma is one of the few states where a minority interest owner can force other interest owners to participate in an expensive well or sell their stake.

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SB 867 left it to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission to work out the details and protect smaller producers.

"It's going to be great for the state and great for the industry," said Tim Wigley, president of the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association. "When rigs are up and active, that's what fuels the economy in this state. That's when hotels are filled and restaurants are filled and people are buying new trucks."

The new law will make Oklahoma drilling locations look more attractive and allow them to better compete with locations in other states, Wigley said.

"The most competition you see is not necessary among the companies themselves, but in the board room where they decide where to invest capital," he said.

Economic stimulus

A study commissioned by the Oklahoma Oil and Gas Association recently found that job creation and economic output jump 40 percent when companies drill longer wells.

"The economics are vastly improved with longer laterals," said Arnella Karges, the oil and gas association's executive vice president. "This will help capital investment in Oklahoma and increase production in the state."

Denver-based FourPoint Energy LLC also plans to move quickly in drilling long wells in western Oklahoma.

"This is going to be huge for us," Scott Goodwin Jr., FourPoint's vice president of operations, said earlier this month. "Longer laterals make more wells economic. This adds jobs. This adds investment. It will mean big things for you in the future."

FourPoint is one of the largest operators in the western Anadarko Basin, which covers much of western Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle. The company for years has been drilling long horizontal wells in Texas, but its horizontal reach has been limited to one mile east of the border.

"Long laterals is the future of onshore U.S. drilling," Goodwin said. "If you look at the popular basins, all are drilling longer laterals."



Adam Wilmoth



Adam Wilmoth returned to The Oklahoman as energy editor in 2012 after working for four years in public relations. He previously spent seven years... [read more >](#)

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Louisiana company pleads guilty to dumping hazardous waste in Savannah

By [WSAV Staff \(http://wsav.com/author/wsav-staff/\)](http://wsav.com/author/wsav-staff/)

Published: August 26, 2017, 6:00 am | Updated: August 26, 2017, 6:00 am



SAVANNAH, Ga. (WSAV) – Boasso America, Inc. (Boasso), headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana, and with a facility in Garden City, Georgia, entered a guilty plea Thursday, August 24 for the illegal transportation and dumping of hazardous waste.

Boasso pled guilty to a felony violation of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), a law regulating the storage and transportation of hazardous waste.

“This company and some of its employees callously dumped hazardous waste into a local community, all to save a little time and money,” said acting United States Attorney James Durham. “Because of their dangerous decisions, the company will be paying a significant amount of money and their employees are spending a lot of time in a federal prison.”

Boasso’s guilty plea follows the convictions of two of its former employees, Ray Mitchell, 52, of Pooler, Georgia, and Maurice Miller, 40, of Savannah, for their individual roles in the illegal transportation and dumping of hazardous waste.

Earlier this year, Miller was sentenced to 28 months in federal prison. Mitchell was sentenced to 20 months in federal prison.

According to evidence presented during multiple guilty plea hearings, Boasso provides transportation services for tank containers containing hazardous wastes.

Boasso's Garden City facility stored and transported its customers' tanks containing hazardous waste.

In 2015, rather than properly transporting and safely disposing of drums and totes at its Garden City facility that contained the hazardous chemical naphthalene, Boasso employees Mitchell and Miller illegally transported and dumped a significant amount of naphthalene into the ground of a nearby Savannah neighborhood.

Exposure to amounts of naphthalene, a main ingredient found in mothballs, can cause serious health issues.

Once discovered, law enforcement and environmental officials quickly removed the hazardous waste before it caused any health concerns.

Further investigation by law enforcement officials uncovered that Boasso employees fabricated invoices in an effort to hide their illegal dumping of hazardous waste.

The investigation of this case was led by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with assistance from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD), and Savannah Fire Department's Haz-Mat team.

As part of its plea agreement, Boasso has agreed to pay full restitution, including cleanup costs; has agreed to pay the maximum criminal fine penalty of \$500,000; and has agreed to establish, implement, and enforce an effective environmental compliance plan, so that future dumping incidents do not happen.

Andy Castro, Special Agent in Charge of EPA's criminal enforcement program for Georgia said, "These corporate and individual convictions show that those who put public health and the environment at risk by violating the law will be held to account."

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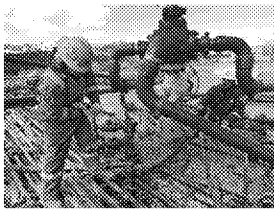
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EPA chief backtracks on delaying rules reducing emissions

By MICHAEL BIES ECKER, Associated Press Published 11:55 a.m. MT Aug. 27, 2017



(Photo: AP Photo/Brennan Linsley, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — One day after 15 states sued him, Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt backtracked on delaying Obama-era rules intended to reduce emissions of smog-causing air pollutants. Pruitt contended his agency was being more responsive than past administrations to states' needs. He made no mention Aug. 2 of the legal challenges to his earlier stand.

At issue is an Oct. 1 deadline for states to begin meeting standards for ground-level ozone. Pruitt announced in June that he would hold off compliance by one year so the EPA had more time to study the plan and avoid "interfering with local decisions or impeding economic growth."

In addition to the suit by a group of states led by New York, Pruitt was sued last month by a dozen public health and environmental groups, including the American Lung Association, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Sierra Club. The EPA was required to file a response in that case by Thursday.

Pruitt, who previously was Oklahoma's attorney general, has long opposed stricter environmental rules. At the EPA, he repeatedly has acted to block or delay regulations opposed by the chemical and fossil-fuel industries.

Wednesday's reversal was the latest legal setback for his agenda. Last month, a federal appeals court in Washington ruled that Pruitt overstepped his authority in trying to stall an Obama administration rule that oil and gas companies monitor and reduce methane leaks.

In a statement, Pruitt suggested his about-face on ozone standards simply reinforced the EPA's commitment to helping states through the complex process of meeting the new standards on time.

"Under previous administrations, EPA would often fail to meet designation deadlines, and then wait to be sued by activist groups and others, agreeing in a settlement to set schedules for designation," said Pruitt, who sued EPA more than a dozen times as a state official. "We do not believe in regulation through litigation, and we take deadlines seriously. We also take the statute and the authority it gives us seriously."

The EPA's statement said Pruitt may at some point use his "delay authority and all other authority legally available" to ensure regulations "are founded on sound policy and the best available information."

Republicans in Congress are pushing for a broader rewrite of the ozone rules. A House bill approved last month seeks to delay the 2015 rules at least eight years. The Senate has not voted yet.

New York's attorney general, Eric Schneiderman, said the states intend to keep up the pressure.

"The EPA's reversal — following our lawsuits — is an important win for the health and safety of those 6.7 million New Yorkers, and the over 115 million Americans directly impacted by smog pouring into their communities," Schneiderman said.

New York was joined in the case by California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, and the District of Columbia.

Ground-level ozone is created when common pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, oil refineries, chemical plants and other sources react in the atmosphere to sunlight. The resulting smog can cause serious breathing problems among sensitive groups of people, contributing to thousands of premature deaths each year.

"These safeguards are essential because smog pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause irreversible lung damage or even death," said Mary Anne Hitt of the Sierra Club. "However, with an administration that prizes corporate polluters and its own extreme agenda more than the health of the public, we can't let up on our fight to protect our families."

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Aquaphor

High Country News

FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THE WEST

Uranium pervades homes on and near Navajo Nation

EPA budget cuts threaten to slow a long-overdue cleanup.

Autumne Spanne/Reveal | Aug. 27, 2017

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Angie Hood grew up in a remote valley tucked along the edge of the Navajo Nation. On hot summer days, Hood and her three siblings would tend to the family's sheep, play football in a steep-banked arroyo and explore the piñon-studded mesas. Then, to cool off, they would splash in a pool of water that streamed from a pipe.

At the time, the Hood children had no idea they were playing in radioactive waste.

Dangerous remnants of the region's Cold War boom, more than 500 uranium mines were abandoned on and near the Navajo reservation, now home to about 175,000 people. Thousands of families like Hood's unwittingly used water from contaminated wells and springs to drink, bathe, hydrate their livestock and irrigate their gardens. In some cases, people built homes from construction materials tainted with mine and mill wastes.

New scientific evidence has emerged that suggests the severity of the Navajos' exposure: Uranium has been found in the dust in 85 percent of sampled homes, and everyone tested, even the babies, has uranium in their bodies, with some carrying concentrations far above the U.S. average.

The Navajo Nation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have worked for more than two decades to address some of the most glaring hazards at the mines. But now the Trump administration is proposing deep budget cuts that could hamper these cleanups.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has proposed a 30 percent reduction in grants to fund tribes' environmental protection, a 20 percent cut in overall EPA staffing and a 30 percent cut to the Superfund program, which identifies polluters and obligates them to fund cleanup of the nation's most toxic sites, including the Navajo mines.

Congress is moving toward less substantial budget cuts as the appropriations process begins. But the EPA is already shrinking its workforce with buyouts and early retirement offers that will eliminate more than 1,200 positions by September.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye is worried that the cuts could derail the EPA's efforts to identify the companies responsible for the mine cleanups, supervise the projects and provide new housing for residents when necessary.

The tribe also receives annual funding from the EPA — \$16 million last year (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-16-million-environmental-improvements-navajo-nation>) — for the tribe's environmental programs, such as enforcement of air pollution rules and water quality projects.

“We need budget increases, not cuts,” Begaye said. “Children and grandchildren have been impacted today, and we want to see if it goes beyond that to great-grandkids and great-great-grandkids. We have to live with this for generations to come.”

So far only one abandoned uranium mine out of 523 has been cleaned up, and the cost of tackling the rest is expected to reach several billion dollars, Begaye said. Even if the funding remains at the level of the Obama administration, it would take decades to complete the work.

Last year, Hood, 36, along with her parents, two daughters and three siblings, left their ancestral land known as Red Water Pond Road, worried about their health. Leaving was painful; the land holds seven generations of her family's prayers, stories and environmental knowledge.

More than 100 members of her extended family still live in the shadow of one of the nation's most complex hazardous waste sites.

Hood's mind often flashes back to the days when she splashed in contaminated water and played atop enormous mounds of uranium tailings just a few hundred feet from her home. Could this have contributed to her thyroid disease? What about her daughter's asthma, her grandfather's lung disease and her aunt's cancer?

"There were no 'Keep Out' signs," she said. "Nothing telling us about the radiation and that it could be dangerous."



Angie Hood, right, and her daughters, Nola, 9, and Desiree, 15, moved to a manufactured home in New Mexico several miles from the Red Water Pond Road community on the Navajo Nation where Angie grew up. The community remains contaminated with uranium from decades-old abandoned mines, so Hood reluctantly left to protect her children's health.

Donovan Quintero/Reveal

Cold War boom – then abandonment

Fueled by the U.S. government's nuclear weapons program and later nuclear power generators, the uranium industry thrived in the Southwest between World War II and the early 1980s.

Church Rock — 6 miles east of Gallup, New Mexico, along old Route 66 — became one of several centers of uranium mining and milling across the Navajo reservation, which is the size of West Virginia. The industry mined millions of tons of the ore here between 1944 and 1986, according to the EPA. Until the late 1960s, the U.S. government was its sole customer.

As a child in the 1950s, Hood's father, Tony, witnessed the arrival of the mining companies to conduct exploratory drilling around his home. No one in his family understood what radioactivity meant, and no one from the government or the mining companies bothered to fill them in.

In 1979, Church Rock became the site of one of the worst nuclear accidents in U.S. history when an earthen dam at the United Nuclear Corporation uranium processing mill gave way a mile downstream from Red Water Pond Road. About 1,100 tons of uranium tailings and 94 million gallons of wastewater containing high levels of radioactivity and heavy metals poured into an arroyo used by Navajos for livestock grazing and irrigation.

As the uranium market plummeted in the 1980s, companies abandoned the mines and mills. They left behind more than 1,000 unsealed pits, tunnels, mine entrances, tailings ponds and waste piles containing highly radioactive materials and toxic chemicals that eroded and leached.

When the EPA and tribal environmental officials began inventorying the mines in 1994, a picture of widespread contamination emerged. Nearly 13 percent of the unregulated drinking water wells, springs and storage tanks tested on the Navajo Nation contain uranium levels exceeding the national drinking water standard, according to one recent study (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5425493/>).

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform told the EPA a decade ago to collaborate with the tribe and four other federal agencies on a plan (<https://www.epa.gov/navajo-nation-uranium-cleanup/five-year-plan-address-impacts-uranium-contamination>) to tackle dozens of sites that posed the highest health risk. But even the highest priority cleanup — a United Nuclear Corp. mine now owned by General Electric that is next to the Red Water Pond Road community — is still years from completion. The U.S. and General Electric are sharing the cleanup costs.

The EPA has reached agreements with 10 companies to address 213 mines, including a \$985 million settlement with Anadarko Petroleum Corp. for 50 former Kerr-McGee mines and a \$600 million settlement with two Freeport-McMoRan subsidiaries for 94 (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/justice-department-epa-and-navajo-nation-announce-settlement-cleanup-94-abandoned>) mines. In addition, the federal government has provided funds to start work on 16 orphan mines for which no responsible party has been determined.

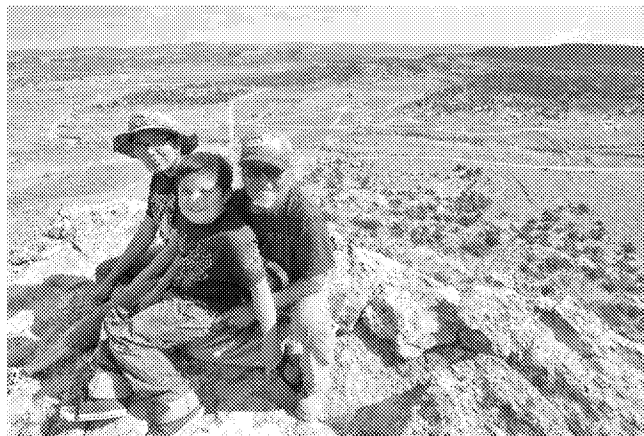
But altogether, these funds will cover cleanup at fewer than half of the Navajo Nation's abandoned mines.

"There's quite a lot of money available to start addressing the problem, but much more money is needed to fully address the Navajo uranium legacy," said Chris Shuey, director of the Uranium Impact Assessment Program at the Southwest Research and Information Center.

In their homes, in their bodies

At Red Water Pond Road, residents wonder if the mines are at fault for their illnesses. Edith Hood, Angie Hood's aunt, was diagnosed with lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system, in 2006; she is now in remission. "There seems to be at least one from each household – thyroid, respiratory and kidney problems, cancer," said Edith Hood, who has lived nearly all her 66 years there and once worked in the mines.

By the early 1950s, federal researchers had linked radiation exposure to lung cancer among the region's uranium miners. A later study (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10738707>) found that about two-thirds of Navajo men who had lung cancer between 1969 and 1993 were former uranium miners.



As a child in the 1950s, Tony Hood witnessed the arrival of mining companies to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium around his community, without warnings about radioactivity. Now health researchers have found uranium exposure to be widespread among the Navajo, so Hood worries about his grandchildren, including Desiree Smith, 15, and Damien Hood, 8.

Donovan Quintero/Reveal

Navajos who reported exposure to uranium mine and mill wastes during the industry's boom years – the 1940s through 1980s – were more than twice as likely to develop kidney disease as those with no self-reported exposures, according to studies led by Dr. Johnnye Lewis, a research professor at the University of New Mexico's College of Pharmacy and co-director of the Center for Native American Environmental Health Equity Research. The studies also have found [links](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28120833) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28120833>) between exposure to mine wastes and inflammation associated with cardiovascular disease.

But no one yet can say whether the Red Water Pond Road community or those with similar exposures have elevated rates of cancer, asthma or other diseases because a comprehensive health study has never been conducted.

Now Lewis is leading the first study to investigate the potential effects of the uranium waste on pregnant women and children. So far the results of the five-year [Navajo Birth Cohort Study](http://nbcs.healthyvoices.org/?page_id=19) (http://nbcs.healthyvoices.org/?page_id=19) are preliminary; the findings have not yet been peer-reviewed or published.

The tests of about 700 Navajo mothers and 200 babies show that the overall distribution of uranium concentrations in their urine is higher than that found in the general U.S. population. About 20 percent of them were particularly highly exposed, with concentrations higher than the 95th percentile found in a [national survey](https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/Uranium_BiomonitoringSummary.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/Uranium_BiomonitoringSummary.html). That means those Navajo exceeded the uranium of 95 percent of Americans overall.

Also, all the babies studied had uranium in their system at birth, and their concentrations tended to increase through the first year of life.

Lewis said what this means for the babies' long-term health is unclear. "Just having uranium in urine is not necessarily indicative of a health risk," Lewis said. "The problem is that we don't know at this point where the concerns are, what the exposure pathways are that present the highest risk, what combinations of metals increase risks and what other factors contribute."

Dust in 85 percent of about 600 Navajo Nation homes tested contained uranium, along with arsenic, lead, manganese and other contaminants, according to researcher Chris Shuey. Now the team is trying to determine how much comes from mining waste versus natural sources since uranium is found naturally in the region's soil.

“Seeing so many homes with detectable uranium indicates how ubiquitous it is and how important it is for us to understand the potentially toxic concentrations, either alone or combined with the other metals we find, such as arsenic,” Lewis said.

A ‘less costly’ EPA

As researchers investigate the health impacts, Red Water Pond Road residents confront the uranium legacy every time they walk out the door. A few hundred yards away, two giant hills of tailings and mine waste are a perpetual reminder that the bulk of the cleanup work is still years away.

Although a cleanup plan has been enacted for the community, progress here and elsewhere on the reservation will be slow, even in the best-case budget scenarios.

The House Appropriations Committee has proposed a 2018 EPA budget that reduces the agency’s funding by \$528 million, far less than the \$2.6 billion cut sought by the Trump administration. The House bill also maintains current tribal grant spending and increases Superfund spending overall. But it cuts Superfund enforcement and operations by \$18 million and it endorses the EPA’s plan to eliminate thousands of employees.

EPA officials offered no answers, declining to provide information about how budget cuts will affect the Navajo cleanups and other programs. “Administrator Pruitt is committed to leading the EPA in a more effective, more focused, less costly way as we partner with states to fulfill the agency’s core mission,” an agency spokesman said.

Pruitt has made it clear he wants to delegate more responsibilities to state and local governments for enforcement and cleanup.

But Eric Jantz, an attorney with the New Mexico Environmental Law Center who represents the Red Water Pond Road community, said it’s “pure fantasy” for the EPA to shift greater responsibility to states and tribes while simultaneously slashing funding.

And expediting cleanups without sufficient money or staff could lead to incomplete or substandard results. Tribes depend on support from EPA regional offices, particularly for expensive, complex operations like the Navajo Nation’s uranium remediation, said Cliff Villa, an environmental law professor at the University of New Mexico and former assistant regional counsel for the EPA.

“You need a lot of really smart and hardworking people working together, and that means a lot of EPA people working with people from the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico and other Four Corner states,” Villa said. “All that slows down when EPA has staffing cuts.”

U.S. Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., called the administration’s EPA budget request “downright offensive” during a recent Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, saying it “would eviscerate very important programs.”

Udall also took issue with shifting decision-making to the states while simultaneously proposing big reductions to state and tribal aid. “If you take that federal support away, tribes and the state of New Mexico, for example, just do not have the resources to step in and fill the void,” he said.

Difficult choices

On Red Water Pond Road, residents now face even more uncertainty than they have over the past two decades. “Sometimes people say, ‘Why don’t you just move?’ But we were born here,” said Edith Hood. “We are close to Mother Earth.”

Her brother Tony explained that the Navajo system of kinship, or k’é, connects not only family but all living things as relatives, even the land itself. “These mesas, all the drainages where we live, where the trees are ... we consider them holy,” he said.

But for Tony and his wife, children and grandchildren, the waiting and worrying became too much. They accepted the EPA’s offer of assistance to relocate to manufactured homes several miles away.

On a recent Sunday in June, Angie and her sister Stephanie returned with Tony and the children to visit the remnants of their doublewide mobile home.

Today, all that remains is the foundation, and some small trees where their umbilical cords are buried – a Navajo tradition to ensure that they remain connected to the land for life. “Some relatives want to stay the rest of their lives – that’s how I felt at first,” said Angie Hood, who is Tony’s youngest daughter. “But my daughters kept asking me, ‘Mom, is it safe to live here?’ What do you tell them?”

“We did it,” her father said, “for the sake of the children.”